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Mr Gary Lewis
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Dear Mr Lewis

Short inspection of Kings Langley School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2018 with Ashlie Hughes, Ofsted inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your leadership over the past 17 years has been very positive for the school and is appreciated by governors, staff, pupils and parents. You have encouraged the school to develop secure relationships more widely in the local community, including with local businesses. In addition, you have led an ambitious programme of change, including overseeing the building of new school facilities and an impressive award-winning curriculum on character education. The governing body provides effective strategic advice and support to you and your senior team. Governors share your ambition for the school's future.

Pupils speak positively about the school and value the high level of support given by staff. Sixth-form students were especially thankful for the commitment of staff to meeting their educational needs. Many agreed when one student said, 'The staff will do anything to help you succeed, nothing is too much trouble.' The vast majority of staff responding to the Ofsted online survey said that they were proud to work at the school and agreed that the school is well led.

During the inspection, pupils were well behaved and courteous. This behaviour helped pupils make the most of their time in lessons. The school was calm. Pupils and parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey said that staff quickly deal with negative issues when they arise. However, a number of them commented that behaviour can fall below the school's own expectation when pupils are not taught by their regular teachers.

You have worked hard over the last two years to ensure that staffing levels stabilise, especially in mathematics and science.

Leaders have placed great emphasis on the traits of 'stickability, self-regulation and empathy' as a foundation to the character education programme. This is evident across all aspects of the pupils' experience at Kings Langley and pupils say that it helps them make healthy decisions and become better citizens.

You recognise that it is now time for a renewed focus on the leadership and delivery of the curriculum, to ensure that outcomes are as good as they can be for all groups of pupils. While pupils' outcomes are good overall, you are aware of some inconsistencies between subjects and groups of pupils. The impact of your actions in tackling these was a focus as your previous inspection asked leaders to address issues within science, the sixth form and outcomes for pupils from a disadvantaged background.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that there is strong culture of safeguarding within the school and all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Staff understand their role in promoting safeguarding and pupils say that they feel safe. The system for referring concerns is used effectively and leaders are diligent in following up all concerns in a timely manner.

Vulnerable pupils are closely monitored. Leaders have effective systems to ensure that these pupils are safe in school and appropriate support is secured from external agencies. Many of these pupils make the same or better academic progress than their peers, and this may be attributed to the level of care and support that they receive from the school.

Pupils speak confidently about how they are taught to keep themselves safe online and in other social situations. The school has a comprehensive programme of safeguarding which is taught during tutor time, assemblies and in the weekly personal, social, health and economic education lesson (PSHEE).

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three key lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remained good. The first line of enquiry considered outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and the impact of leaders' actions to secure improvement. In 2017, the progress of disadvantaged pupils was significantly below that of their peers; outcomes in English were a positive exception to this. Additional support for this group of pupils focused mainly on developing their literacy. You have recently taken steps to broaden this focus to include numeracy. The employment of two new higher-level teaching assistants to exclusively support the literacy and numeracy of disadvantaged pupils is a positive step forward and complements the recent appointment of a whole-school champion for this area.
- In lessons, teachers were aware of their disadvantaged pupils and many had simple strategies to help promote their progress. These included planned seating

arrangements and specific questioning techniques. The school has created individual action plans for each disadvantaged pupil and the new whole-school champion is tasked with ensuring that these are acted upon by teaching staff. Progress for disadvantaged pupils is now improving in the lower year groups.

- The second key line of enquiry concerned the quality of leadership and teaching within English, mathematics and science and whether the areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed effectively. The leaders of English, mathematics and science showed good insight into their departmental areas of strength and areas that need developing. They had sensible plans to consolidate the gains already made and they will benefit from the appointment of a new senior leader tasked explicitly with giving them support and guidance. School internal data shows that pupils' progress is now stronger in the lower year groups for these subjects and changes made by the leaders are having a positive impact.
- Leaders acknowledge that a renewed focus on the leadership of the quality of teaching across the curriculum is needed to raise the outcomes for all pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils. In some lessons where teachers held high expectations of pupils, the learning and progress for pupils were strong. However, this was seen in too few lessons and the level of challenge across the curriculum was often not high enough.
- The third area of focus was the leadership of the sixth form. Inspectors looked at how leaders evaluate the impact of their work and use these evaluations to promote further improvement. 2017 outcomes showed only one subject at key stage 5 performing well against national averages. Internal school data shows this is likely to increase for 2018 and leaders in the sixth form recognise that the quality of teaching is a key factor in this improvement. However, leaders did not have a coherent plan of how they will ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better across the sixth-form curriculum. The current system of relying upon the heads of department and other senior leaders to monitor and support the quality of teaching rather than sixth-form leaders has led to a disjointed approach where responsibilities are not clearly defined.
- Sixth-form leaders have implemented a new system of tracking students' performance and the students appreciate this. It is effective in ensuring that all students know their performance in each subject and pastoral staff are able to make timely intervention to support academic outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes for pupils who are disadvantaged improve to match those of their peers with similar starting points
- the level of challenge in lessons is appropriate and all staff have high expectations of what pupils can do
- the development and monitoring of the quality of teaching in the sixth form lead to improved outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diana Osagie
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, middle leadership team and the chair of governors. They met with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5. Inspectors visited lessons with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. They considered 133 responses from parents, 183 responses from pupils and 47 responses from staff to the Ofsted online survey. The team reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, improvement plans and information about pupils' outcomes, progress and attendance. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documentation and procedures, scrutinised the school's record of checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school, and carried out checks to confirm that the school's website meets publication requirements.